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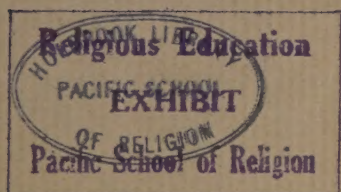
BIBLE PLAYS OUT OF THE EAST.

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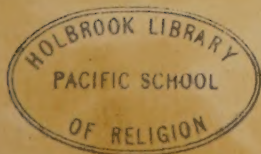


BIBLE PLAYS OUT OF THE EAST

ANNA R. KENNEDY



no one



Religious Education
EXHIBIT
Pacific School of Religion

❧ BIBLE PLAYS ❧ OUT OF THE EAST

*Being seven episodes related to
the life of Christ
from Christmas to Easter*

ANNA R. KENNEDY

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New York
The Womans Press
1929

Religious Education
EXHIBIT
Pacific School of Religion

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IN MEMORY
OF
BETH
WHO LOVED TO TELL
BIBLE STORIES

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INTRODUCTION

THE more we explore the Bible the more we find how inexhaustible is its treasure. There are many ways of showing this treasure, and drama is one of them. By means of dramatic presentation of Bible stories and incidents we find new friends and new ideas. Bible characters we had thought little about, as well as those well known and loved, come alive. The whole Bible is a great drama, and, being this, an understanding of the land from whence it came—its atmosphere, in a dramatic and literary sense—helps to make its people, stories, and message more clear. The message of the Bible is for all people, but it is an eastern book. If only we Westerners would handle it as such!

The words of certain parts of the Bible, particularly those of the Gospels, are so well known to us that unintentionally we have covered them with a cloak of familiarity. But if we actually find ourselves on the shore of Galilee, and see a fisherman using a drag-net, or a sudden storm coming up over the lake, or a shepherd with his flock of sheep going along the road, at once words which were prosaic flame from the page and become a vital reality with a meaning. Perhaps it is a threshing floor and the wind is blowing the chaff away as the worker throws the wheat up into the air, just as his forebears have done for generations. At Bethlehem we sit on a roof under the brilliant night sky and look out over the vineyards and fields of David, Amos, Boaz and Ruth, and the shepherds. Or we walk along the road to Emmaus, and, if it is springtime, as it ought to be, we feel His Presence in the beauty of the flowers that cover the hills, the colors in the bare rocks, and the perfect blue of sky and distant sea. Going north we wonder at snow-capped Hermon that looks out over the Lebanon ranges and the valleys filled with olives and vineyards and

fountains of water. Color is everywhere—even in the moonlight! And we had thought the country might be drab and dull and perhaps not very interesting!

So it is with the Bible, if we will but come into more intimate contact with it; it has just such delight and interest as has the country. If we stay long in the East, enough to know the people of the land, with their love of story-telling and imagery, we begin to understand the Bible, and much that was foggy to our western minds, the result of other ways of living and thinking, becomes clarified. We are surprised to find how many customs and scenes are the same today as they were in Bible times. These very tangible experiences make us realize, more than we ever could before, the Power behind the Book, which has made it live through these many hundreds of years.

This very contact that is stimulating to a western Christian is the cloak of familiarity to the eastern Christian. He needs stimulation too, but of a different sort. So it occurred to me that dramatizing familiar Bible stories might be of help and interest to groups of near-eastern young people, and most of these services and plays were prepared for them. Words could be readily memorized, and participation was a very real thing. Boys and girls do not act together in the Near East, so this is why *THE WOMEN FROM GALILEE* and *EASTER NIGHT* came to be written for an Easter program where both wanted to take part. In the other plays that we gave, girls took the parts of the men or boys. Of necessity the productions were carried out in a simple way but with great earnestness and in a spirit of worship. Delight was taken in trying to attain the greatest possible effect from what was already at hand, but this did not mean that costumes were always easy to procure, for these girls and boys follow Paris fashions as do Westerners. The only money spent was for a dark-blue curtain background, and colored crêpe paper.

Because of the intimate touch of most of these plays with

near-eastern young people and appreciation of what they did, it is hoped that this little book may help to bring to western young people something more of the beauty and color and simplicity of the Land of our Lord.

ANNA R. KENNEDY

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRODUCING

THOSE who are just venturing upon the use of religious drama often think that because biblical plays are of another age and country, the scenery and costumes must be very difficult. This may sometimes be the case, but for the life of the people which these plays portray, the need is simplicity. The descriptions given here and in the text are not of historical accuracy, but of what one sees today in the country home-life of Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Although the cities may be quite modern, the little villages by the roadside and in the mountains still keep the simple charm which they have always had. As for costuming the kings and the angels, one can depend on color harmonies and beauty of line to get the desired effect. If the lighting is good and there are one or two distinctive objects to convey the oriental atmosphere, and a few fundamental pieces of scenery that can be rearranged in various ways, this, with borrowing, is plenty for a beginning.

If the plays are given in a church no scenery or curtain should be used. A curtain may be constructed for the CHRISTMAS TABLEAUX, as this would be especially needed, but when it is drawn, the whole chancel background is seen. This curtain should be in keeping with the decoration of the church, otherwise the tableaux had best be given in the church house or in a hall, and all the descriptions given are with such a place in mind. If a property is needed in a church production use only the most necessary one, but better none at all. The directions *left* and *right* are from the point of view of one on the platform, facing front.

SCENERY: A dark-blue background is useful for many scenes, as it may be used either for night or for interiors which do not especially need a light wall. Figures stand out well against the dark blue. Such a background can be made from inexpensive

paper-muslin, cut into lengths and sewed together; do not gather it too much at the top. A background of pale blue is needed for daytime sky, and this will do as well for the light walls of interiors. Have two or four screens for the sides of the stage, with extra strips of the same light- or dark-blue material to throw over them. From heavy gray-green or brown paper cut an outline of gently rolling hills to be pinned when needed to the background. The rock tomb should be of gray paper if it is to be pinned against the background, or gray muslin can be draped over two screens at the side, the back hidden by branches. Have the opening quite low. Rocks may be made by covering books or footstools with coarse gray material. For the stone in front of the tomb use a table covered with cushions under the gray. Arrange the coping of the roof by benches, with rugs thrown over them. If real branches and foliage are not available, get bare branches and paste on paper leaves or blossoms. This would probably have to be done for the palms. The Virgin's tree may be cut from cardboard or paper and fastened to the background. Show the spring by a few rocks and foliage.

PROPERTIES: The *water-jar* is about the most important object in an oriental house. If nothing else can be secured, this is most needful for the exterior or interior of a house or even a camp. Rather than not have it at all, cut several shapes out of thick dark-brown paper, and fasten to the background. The larger one, which is used for carrying water from the fountain, is about two feet high, and can readily be copied from pictures. If the church is in a city where there is a Syrian community (and there are many such) it would be interesting to take a trip there and to secure a couple of the little jars, which are about ten inches high. They ought to be very cheap. Round flat loaves of Syrian *bread* and olives can be bought at the same time. (See also note on page 42.) Also a market-basket. The jars are usually arranged in a row on a low bench against a wall, either outside or inside the house.

A *lamp* or two can be modeled out of clay from a picture or from an ancient one in a museum. Or else use a small earthen dish, deep enough to hide the base of a wax night-light or a candle stub.

Construct an "earthen" *brazier* from a small-sized scrapbasket covered with gray material and put a "fire" inside near the top. (See LIGHTING.) Earthen, copper, or wooden bowls and dishes can be used, and flat, round basket trays, if they are procurable. *Beds* mean only mattresses covered with some bright material, either flowered or wide-striped. They are piled up on top of each other in the daytime, and as many as are needed are spread out at night. The covers are heavy quilts. The family all sleep together, putting as many beds on the floor as needed. They remove only shoes, outer garment, and turban or *tarbush* (fez). As a rule everyone sits on the floor, but a few low benches will be needed for the water-jars, and sometimes to sit on, as in the Upper Room. If possible have them, and any tables used, of rough-hewn wood. Have a couple, at least, of hard oblong cushions covered with the same material as the mattresses, for the floor, to lean against or for sitting on. The floor covering is usually straw mats or a bright red rug.

LIGHTING: Sometimes one has already a complete equipment, but if there is only a row of footlights, beautiful effects can be procured by shading the lights with different colors of crêpe paper, being careful of course that it is supported away from the bulbs. Never have a full glaring light. Purple for night scenes, yellow for sunlight, orange or rose for late afternoon or early morning. Red paper over a flashlight beneath a few sticks of wood makes a fine fire. Be sure to have the light at the organ or piano shaded. The lighting is very important and helps to secure the right atmosphere.

MUSIC: This consists mostly of hymns and carols either played by the organist or sung by a choir. All hymns and carols may be found in "The New Hymnal" of the Episcopal Church except

"Into the Woods," which may be found in "Hymns for the Living Age," the "Methodist Hymn-Book," and others. "Away in a Manger" is in the "Hymnal for American Youth." If possible the choir should be unseen.

COSTUMES: Better than any description is a book of pictures such as William Hole's* or some other artist who has painted from life and knows the Holy Land. To try to reproduce these from materials one has at hand is a very interesting study. Cloaks may be made from dressing gowns or coats turned inside out so as not to show the sleeves. Couch or table covers can readily be pinned into long loose garments. If material needs to be bought, colored cheesecloth does very well for the flowing dresses of the women. Get a wide-striped heavier material for the outer tunic of the men, and a light plain material (white is best) for the close-fitting under tunic. This has a wide sash of color contrasting with the turban or coat. Use silk table covers or even towels for turbans for the men. Or some of them may wear the short flowing *khafeyeh*—a large square of silk or sateen folded triangularly, and bound to the head by a cord. It is either white or colored stripes. For the shoes, use plain leather or kid slippers, or soles cut from cardboard for sandals, with string to fasten them around the ankles and between the toes. Shoes are taken off when entering the house. White woolen stockings are often worn except in summer. A white cheesecloth veil about halfway down the back is all right for the women, or a soft scarf. Try to have the women's dresses of plain material, bright in color but harmonious—for instance, yellow, violet or blue, and deep rose. The Virgin's dress should always be blue. Certain villages do have special costumes, as in Bethlehem, but there is no necessity for this here. Sleeves are long for both men and women. Women's hair ought not to show, unless around the forehead, or unless it is in two braids. Children are dressed as miniature grown-ups. The angels wear long simple white gowns. Bobbed

* "The Life of Jesus of Nazareth." Eyre & Spottiswoode, London.

hair is best. Wings may be cut the proper shape from two thicknesses of white crêpe paper pasted together and either fastened to the back of the angel or to the background, where the angel will pose in front of them. The simplest way to make helmets and shields is from cardboard and silver paint; spears from two straight canes fastened together and a silvered cardboard point. We used heavy cloaks for the Roman soldiers, but armor may be copied from a picture by using silvered oilcloth. Do not let your friends throw away their old dresses and scarfs! Start a costume chest.

All the plays are for the school or parish house, but the CHRISTMAS TABLEAUX, THE WOMEN FROM GALILEE, EASTER NIGHT, and possibly THE VIRGIN'S TREE, may be given in the church.

CHRISTMAS TABLEAUX

*A service arranged for a church house or hall but which may be
given in the church*

CHARACTERS

ISALAH

MARY

GABRIEL

ELISABETH

THE SHEPHERDS (3 or 4)

THE ANGELS (5 or 6)

JOSEPH

THE THREE WISE MEN

THE READER

PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES

(any number)

THE CHOIR

A VIOLINIST

NOTE: The curtain should be drawn back to show the tableau *before* the music or the reading which precedes it finishes. Do not leave the curtain open too long, and in any case close it before the end of whatever music or reading accompanies the tableau. The organ may play very softly during the reading.

PROLOGUE—TABLEAUX I-III

TABLEAU I—ISAIAH

CHOIR: "O come, O come, Emmanuel" (*Omit verses 2 and 4*).

SCENE: *A long low seat with a back, the whole covered with*

draperies, is against a dark-blue starry sky. ISAIAH, the prophet, in a robe of deep color, is sitting sideways, writing on a scroll, which rests on the back of the seat as if on a window-sill.

READER: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." (*Isaiah 9: 6, 7*)

"Behold a king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. . . . And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." (*Isaiah 32: 1, 2, 17*)

TABLEAU II—THE ANNUNCIATION

VIOLIN: "Meditation," from "*Thais*."

SCENE: *The good news comes to MARY at her home in Nazareth. (Light background and no other object.) MARY wears a blue gown and white veil. She is kneeling and the ANGEL GABRIEL is holding a lily toward her. GABRIEL does not have to wear white. A shimmering rose color with the white wings makes a beautiful picture. It is well to take a Fra Angelico or one of the other Annunciation paintings as a model. It should have simplicity.*

READER: "And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." (*Luke 1: 28; or verses 26 to 38*)

TABLEAU III—MARY AND ELISABETH

ORGAN: *Music of the "Magnificat."*

SCENE: *A garden in the springtime in the hill country of Judea.*

Light background; flowers and plants. ELISABETH is welcoming her cousin. MARY is hurrying toward her. ELISABETH's arms are outstretched. She is a much older woman.

READER: "And Mary arose in those days, and went with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth." (*Luke 1: 39; or verses 39-45*)

CHOIR: The "Magnificat."

TABLEAU IV—THE SHEPHERDS

CHOIR (*Very softly*): "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (*First two verses*).

READER: The prophet Micah saith: "But thou Bethlehem, though thou be little among the thousands of Juda, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

SCENE: *In the fields near Bethlehem.*

A. *Dark background with stars. The SHEPHERDS are sitting a little to the left in a semicircle about a fire. One has his head forward as if drowsing, another is stretched out, and another is standing looking into the fire. They are wearing long warm shepherds' coats, red, or black and white striped (wide). Wound about their heads is the usual eastern head-covering. They are holding their staves or keeping them close by. It may be possible to have a few sheepskins with pillows under them to represent the sheep. When the curtain opens the music changes to "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night," the choir singing the first verse.*

READER: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." (*Luke 2: 8*)

The curtain closes for a moment for

B. *An ANGEL in soft flowing white has appeared and is standing at the right. The SHEPHERDS have drawn back in attitudes of fear and amazement.*

READER: "And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." (*Luke 2: 9-12*)

CHOIR: "Joy to the World."

The curtain closes for a moment for

C. *Other ANGELS have appeared. There is more adoration now than fear in the SHEPHERDS' faces. All are covered with light. "Angels from the Realms of Glory" is played softly.*

READER: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (*Luke 2: 13, 14*)

TABLEAU V—THE MANGER

CHOIR: "Silent Night" (*First two verses*).

SCENE: *The adoration of the shepherds. Dark background with stars. MARY is sitting by the manger of straw and looking down into it. A light from the manger illumines her face. JOSEPH stands behind her, and the SHEPHERDS are in front on bended knees.*

READER: "And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And

they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger." (*Luke 2: 15, 16*)

CHOIR: "Silent Night" (*Last verses*).

TABLEAU VI—THE COMING
OF THE WISE MEN

CHOIR: "From the Eastern Mountains" (*One or two verses*).

SCENE: *In silk robes and turbans of harmonious rich colors the three KINGS are carrying their gifts, each behind the other. They are looking up and following the star, right.*

READER: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship Him." (*Matthew 2: 1, 2*)

CHOIR: "We Three Kings of Orient Are" (*First verse*).

READER: "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may worship Him also." (*Matthew 2: 3-8*)

ORGAN: *Music only, of "We Three Kings."*

TABLEAU VII—THE GIFTS

READER: "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

(*Matthew 2: 9, 10*)

CHOIR: "Away in a Manger" (*First verse*).

SCENE: MARY is sitting a little at the side, right. The manger is not there. She is holding the CHILD. JOSEPH stands behind her, and the star shines above them. The WISE MEN are bending low in adoration and offering their gifts.

READER: "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshiped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." (*Matthew 2: 11*)

CHOIR: "We Three Kings of Orient Are," *verses two, three, and four. As these verses are sung, each KING in turn holds up his gift. Or, if preferred, verses two and three are sung by the choir between Tableaux VI and VII, and verse four here.*

READER: "And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way." (*Matthew 2: 12*)

TABLEAU VIII—CHRISTMAS TODAY

ORGAN: "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (*Without choir*).

SCENE: The Holy Family is in the center, with the star above, and grouped around are grown-ups and children of many different nationalities who have come to adore the Christ-Child. Have as many as possible without crowding. Each one carries a lighted candle. If gifts are being given for some special purpose, these can be carried too, and it may be more effective for the whole

church school to take part in this, coming from the back of the hall or church down the center aisle in a procession, as many as possible in a foreign costume, and only the front ones going up on the stage, to form the tableau.

READER: "Behold, these shall come from far: and lo, these from the north and from the west and these from the land of Sinim."
(*Isaiah 49: 12*)

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION *sing*: "O Come, All Ye Faithful."

THE VIRGIN'S TREE

This miracle play is founded on a legend about a very old sycamore tree which is today standing in Egypt, at Matariyeh, near Cairo. It is said that during the flight into Egypt the Holy Family rested under its branches, and the spring which waters the garden about the tree was called into being by the Child Jesus. At the present time the water from this spring is sweet and drinkable while the water of all the other springs in the neighborhood is brackish. Many a traveler to Egypt makes a pilgrimage to the Virgin's Tree. A little chapel is close by.

THE CHARACTERS

A SHEPHERD

THEIR THREE ATTENDANTS

A MOTHER

MARY

THE THREE WISE MEN

JOSEPH

THE CHILD

There is one scene, beginning in the early morning and closing at noonday. The time is in the first year of our Lord's life. The place is an oasis in the Egyptian desert. A SHEPHERD is sitting on the ground under a large sycamore tree (back), playing his pipe. A spring of water is near the tree. Presently a woman is heard weeping. She enters from left, carrying a water-jar.

MOTHER: What shall I do? What shall I do? My child will die, and he is my only son.

SHEPHERD: What is the matter with him?

MOTHER: He will not drink of the water of this spring, and from where can I fetch any better?

SHEPHERD: He should get used to it, like all the rest of us.

MOTHER: But he is so little . . . only three years old. I know not what aileth him.

SHEPHERD: Look thou! A caravan cometh.

MOTHER: They will be coming hither for water.

SHEPHERD: Our *bitter* water!

MOTHER: Likely they are merchantmen from Damascus who will be glad of any water. I will fill my jar and be gone ere they come.

SHEPHERD: These be not merchantmen. See their camels and their rich robes. Three of them! And servants attending.

MOTHER: Thinkest thou they are *kings*?

SHEPHERD: They seem like kings or else men who are very wise.

The MOTHER and the SHEPHERD stand left-back and bow low as the three WISE MEN enter, right. Their SERVANTS hasten to the spring to bring them water while they sit on the ground.

BALTHAZAR: This must be our place of parting.

CASPAR: We shall miss the companionship of our journeying together.

MELCHIOR: And our study of the stars.

BALTHAZAR (*Drinking*): This water is very strange.

CASPAR: It is indeed bitter.

MELCHIOR: Tell us, good shepherd, is your water always thus?

SHEPHERD: Aye, my lord, we have always known it as thou hast tasted it.

MOTHER (*Coming before them and prostrating herself*): Oh, my good lords, I see that my lords are great and mighty. Will ye not change this water? I speak with boldness because of my child, my only son, who hath a strange illness, and he will not touch the water I bring to him from this spring. It is not only for me but for all my people. Will ye not help us?

MELCHIOR: Alas, O woman, I cannot change the water, nor can these my brothers. We be but men who live under the will of God on High.

MOTHER: God?

BALTHAZAR: We bid thee pray to Him. In his great goodness He may show thee a way.

CASPAR: Some day a King will reign who will change all things.

MELCHIOR: He is now but a Child.

MOTHER: Where is He?

BALTHAZAR: We have been to worship Him, far from here in the north country. (*Rising*) I must bid farewell, O my brothers, and be on my way before the noonday heat. Here (*To the MOTHER*), is a piece of gold for thee. I hope thou mayest find a medicine to cure thy son.

MOTHER: Peace be to thy hands, and a thousand blessings upon thee and all thy house forever, O king.

BALTHAZAR: And to thee. Farewell, O my brothers.

CASPAR: All praise be to God that we followed his Star and found the King.

MELCHIOR: All praise be to God for his heavenly messenger who imparted to us in our dreams that we should not return unto Herod.

BALTHAZAR: The sound of that Voice is still in my ears.

CASPAR: God's Presence hath indeed been close at hand, and will continue to go with us.

MELCHIOR: Peace go with thee.

BALTHAZAR: God give thee peace. (*Each in turn touches both cheeks of the other, in farewell, and they go out silently to their camels, right.*)

MOTHER: I go quickly to my son. (*Exit left.*)

SHEPHERD: And I to my sheep. (*Exit left.*)

Here may be sung by a choir or by everyone the Children's Crusade hymn, "Fairest Lord Jesus," the first two verses, as the light gradually grows brighter, to indicate the passage of time.

The HOLY FAMILY enter. JOSEPH is carrying the CHILD, who is two or three months old. MARY sits under the tree and JOSEPH gives her the CHILD. He then goes for water to the spring, giving it to the CHILD first. MARY drinks and JOSEPH.

JOSEPH: Thou'rt very tired. The journey hath been hard for thee and long.

MARY: But this good water hath refreshed me. It is so cool and sweet.

JOSEPH: Yea, and see how clear it is, coming out of the dry earth.

MARY: And how good is the shade of this tree. Now I can better understand the saying of our prophet Isaiah, "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Let us give thanks for the tree and the water.

JOSEPH: And thanks that we are near our journey's end in safety.
(*They bow their heads. The MOTHER enters, and looks longingly at MARY and the CHILD.*)

MOTHER: Oh, my sister, thou hast a Child. If thou could'st but tell me what aileth my little son, so that I might get for him some healing balm. Truly I do not know where to seek it.

MARY: I am sorry for thee. Canst thou not bring thy son here? This good water will surely help him.

MOTHER: *Good* water? What sayest thou? It is because of this water that my child is ill. He will not drink the awful bitterness. Hast thou tasted?

MARY: Yea, we have all drunk of its cool sweetness. See how quietly the Child is sleeping.

MOTHER: Dost come from far? Thy speech is different. (*She drinks from the spring and is amazed. Dropping to her knees she cries*) It is the Child of whom the Wise Men told us! The new King! Praise be to God. Now *my* child will live, for this is truly Water of Life!

The choir sings the last two verses of the same hymn.

LOCUSTS AND WILD HONEY

CHARACTERS

ELISABETH

JOHN, a boy of twelve

AARON, Elisabeth's brother-in-law

MARTHA, Aaron's wife

ZACHARIAS, their son

MARY

JOSEPH

SIMON, a friend from Nazareth

A CHOIR

SCENE I

In the hill country of Judea, in the twelfth year of our Lord's life. On the roof of Elisabeth's house at Ain Karem, about ten miles southwest of Jerusalem. Hills in the background. The top branches of an almond tree with its pink blossoms are seen above the coping of the roof. Steps to the ground are at right-back. A couple of straw mats are spread out on the roof. Near the center is a piece of leather and a nearly finished pouch. One or two small water-jars are on the coping. A "bed" and a couple of "cushions" are in the left corner, back. It is late afternoon.

ELISABETH enters, having come slowly and carefully up the steps. She is a woman of about sixty-five years. She wears a dark-red gown. One end of her white veil is crossed at her neck. Looking about somewhat anxiously, she sees the leather pouch and picks it up.

ELISABETH: Here is the pouch, still unfinished, that he was making for the journey. I wonder what keeps him so long today.

(*Goes over to edge of roof and shading her eyes looks off and down into the valley, left.*) John loves to wander in the wild places, but I know the hand of the Lord is with him. Before he was born, the angel Gabriel said, "Thou shalt have joy and gladness and many shall rejoice at his birth." Aye, it was so——

AARON (*Calling from below*): Ho! Elisabeth! Art thou ready for the journey tomorrow?

ELISABETH: Yes, yes. Is it thou, Aaron? Welcome, my brother. Come up and rest thyself. (*Goes to top of stairs to meet him.* AARON *appears. He is about fifty. He is wearing a striped coat and a flowing striped silk head-covering. On his arm is a basket of olives.*)

AARON: How art thou?

ELISABETH: I am well, thank God. And thou?

AARON: I am very well.

ELISABETH: Sit down, I pray thee, and rest.

AARON: Nay, I thank thee, Elisabeth. Our company leaves for Jerusalem early in the morning. I came but to see if I could do anything more for thee.

ELISABETH: I thank thee, Aaron. We will be ready to start with the dawn. Hast thou seen John on thy way back from thy vineyards? He hath not yet come home.

AARON: No, the rascal! Wandering off again just when he is most needed. Doth he not realize the importance of his twelfth year at the Passover Feast? Hunting for his locusts and wild honey when he ought to be here helping thee make ready for the journey.

ELISABETH: Oh, speak not so my brother! John hath indeed helped me. Since Zacharias died he hath been very thoughtful. And I have the girl Leah, who is a faithful servant. (*Holds up the pouch she has been fingering, with loving pride.*) Look at this leather pouch he hath made! Is it not well done?

AARON: Well enough. But—he doth not seem to be on the road

to priesthood like his father Zacharias. Mayhap after this journey to Jerusalem and the temple, he will be more inclined that way.

ELISABETH: I do not know. (*Sitting on the "bed."* AARON *sits on the coping.*) I only know that the angel said, "He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he shall be great in the sight of the Lord." And thou knowest, Aaron, his *name* was not to be Zacharias. Hast thou forgotten the song of his father at his birth? "Yea, and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High." Our prophets of old were not always priests.

AARON: As my boy Zacharias is named for thy husband—my good brother—he may follow the family tradition, and become a priest. Somehow I could not do it.

ELISABETH: I think John hath a little of thee, Aaron. Thou dost love thy vineyards and thy olive groves.

JOHN (*Calling from below*): My mother, oh, my mother!

ELISABETH (*Rising*): He hath come! (*JOHN comes running to her. He is wearing a coarse brown tunic with a leather belt, and sandals. A bursting leather pouch is slung over his shoulder. They embrace.*) My son! I have been wondering about thee. It is so late in the day. Go and greet thy uncle. He came to ask if he could do aught for our journey. But we are ready!

JOHN: Peace be to thee, O my uncle.

AARON: And to thee. What hast thou been doing all this day?

JOHN: Seeing and hearing a great many things.

AARON: What hast thou there?

JOHN: My wild honey. (*Shows it to them.*) I wrapped it in grape leaves. I thought that Jesus and his mother might like it.

MARTHA (*Calling from below*): Aaron! Aaron!

AARON: That is Martha.

MARTHA: Aaron, art thou up there?

AARON: Yea, Martha, dost thou need me?

ELISABETH (*Leaning over coping*): Welcome, Martha, wilt thou come up?

MARTHA (*Coming up*): I cannot stay. (*Enters, and kisses ELISABETH and JOHN on each cheek.*) There is still much preparation for tomorrow. There was no one at home and so I came to fetch Aaron, because the man whose donkeys we are taking with us to Jerusalem hath come for the payment of them.

ELISABETH: Sit down a little while he goes. Thou'rt tired. Leah will bring to thee and Aaron a refreshing drink. I will call her now.

MARTHA: I thank thee, Elisabeth, but I must return with Aaron. We shall indeed sit and talk tomorrow evening in the camp on the Mount of Olives. (*Turns to JOHN, who has been working on his new pouch.*) John, Zacharias could not find thee today.

JOHN: I was finding a spring that was hidden far in a deep valley. I will show it to Jesus when He comes after the Passover Feast, and Zacharias may come then.

ELISABETH: He also found some wild honey.

JOHN: It is for Jesus and his mother.

MARTHA: Jesus must be twelve years old too. He will be coming down from Nazareth in Galilee with Mary and Joseph. I shall be very glad to see them.

AARON: Come, Martha, I must see that man. (*To ELISABETH*) You and John will be at the fountain an hour before sunrise?

ELISABETH: Aye. Tomorrow we will meet you there.

AARON: May thy night be happy.

MARTHA (*Going*): And mayest thou waken in the morning with joy.

ELISABETH: Go in peace.

MARTHA AND AARON: God give thee peace. (*ELISABETH stands*

watching them go down the steps. JOHN leans over the coping, and then seats himself cross-legged.)

JOHN: I must finish this pouch before sunset, mother.

ELISABETH: I wish thou hadst come home sooner, my son.

JOHN: There was so much to see and do, and God was talking to me. Mother, can we see the place in the temple at Jerusalem where the angel spoke to my father?

ELISABETH: No, that place is only for the priests.

JOHN: Then I can never go there unless I am a priest?

ELISABETH: No, my son.

JOHN: But I will never be a priest.

ZACHARIAS (*From below*): John, where art thou?

JOHN: I am here on the roof, Zacharias; dost thou want me?

ZACHARIAS: Come down quickly and see what I have made.

JOHN: And I have my new pouch to show thee. (*Starting to go*)

ELISABETH: It will soon be cool up here on the roof.

JOHN: Shall I bring thee thy cloak, my mother?

ELISABETH: No, my son, I will not need it, for I too am coming down in a few moments. Leah will be ready with our evening meal. (JOHN goes.) . . . The song of Zacharias hath been in my heart all day, as I have thought of our going to Jerusalem—the song he sang when John was born. (*The lights are lowered as she stands looking off toward the setting sun, left, while a choir sings the "Benedictus" softly, the audience joining in if desired.*)

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;

For He hath visited and redeemed his people,

And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us

In the house of his servant David. . . .

(*Curtain closes.*)

And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest:

For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord

To prepare his ways;

To give knowledge of salvation unto his people

By the remission of their sins,
 Through the tender mercy of our God;
 Whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,
 To give light to them that sit in darkness
 And in the shadow of death,
 To guide our feet into the way of peace."

SCENE II

A camp on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. The stars are shining and the moon is just past the full. It is evening of the third day of the Passover Feast. At the right is a tent door. Against the side of the tent are a basket and a water-jar (if possible a saddle-bag also). On the ground in front of the tent are sitting ELISABETH and MARTHA and JOSEPH. In the center is a fire. They are tired after all the sight-seeing and moving about amongst the crowds going to the temple. Presently JOSEPH rises, goes to a little pile of sticks at the back, and puts one or two on the fire. He is about to sit down again when MARY quietly appears in the tent door.

ELISABETH: Come and sit with us, Mary.

MARY (*Looking front*): O my kinspeople, look away through the olive trees and across the valley at the beauty of the Holy City. The long wall is golden in the moonlight, and the temple shines above it. How good it is for us to be here, and what a heritage is ours!

ELISABETH: Yea, we have a goodly heritage.

MARTHA: The Holy City is beautiful.

ELISABETH: Art thou not tired, Mary?

MARY: A little, but everything has been so interesting. . . .
 I hope Aaron was not too tired to go with the boys?

MARTHA: O no, he is used to walking about his vineyards at night after a day's work.

MARY: It was like Jesus to want to climb to the top of the Mount and see the Holy City from there. He thought they could get the best view away from the camp and above, where it is quiet.

JOSEPH: I was not here when they left. Who went?

MARTHA: Aaron and Zacharias, John and Jesus.

ELISABETH: The boys are never tired.

JOSEPH: No, and I think they have missed nothing these three days. But we will soon have to be starting back to Nazareth.

ELISABETH: We had hoped that thou and Mary and Jesus could return with us for a visit. Surely you will. We are expecting you.

MARY: Thank thee, cousin Elisabeth, and I wish it were possible, but we must return with the Nazareth caravan. Thou knowest the length and danger of the journey; so many robber bands are about in these days.

JOSEPH: A large company is the safest one.

ELISABETH: But there may be other caravans later. John will be so disappointed.

JOSEPH: Later the Jordan Valley will be too hot for travelers. I thank thee too, Elisabeth.

MARY: It was our great king Solomon, the builder of the temple, who said, "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone: the flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds is come." That is the time it is now, Elisabeth, a beautiful time, and I wish we might enjoy it together. (*Enter, from left, SIMON, a friend from Nazareth. They all rise.*)

SIMON: May your night be happy. (*They bow.*)

JOSEPH: And may thy night be happy and blessed.

SIMON: How is your health?

ALL: We are well, thank God.

MARTHA: Sit down with us, sir.

SIMON: I thank thee, lady, but may I speak alone with thee, Joseph?

JOSEPH: Assuredly, my friend. (*They go back, right.*)

MARTHA: I will bring water for him with a little lemon. (*She enters the tent. MARY and ELISABETH sit down together.*)

MARY: O Elisabeth, I have been so glad to be with thee again. Thou dost understand so much that is in my heart.

ELISABETH: I know, I know. I had hoped to see more of thee.

MARY: And I of thee. It has been good to tell thee about Jesus.

ELISABETH: Yea, and to tell thee about John. (*MARTHA returns with a little bowl just as the man from Nazareth bows to JOSEPH and goes off, left.*)

MARTHA: I brought Simon a refreshing drink and now he goeth!

JOSEPH: He is very hurried. He came to give us word that a large group of the Nazareth people are eager to start on the homeward journey and they wish to leave early tomorrow.

ELISABETH: Oh, say not so!

JOSEPH: It seems that Cana and Tiberius folk have planned to go, and they think it best to make a large company and go with them. A bad robbery tale hath got about.

MARY: What didst thou tell him, Joseph?

JOSEPH: I told him that if he and his family were going we would go likewise.

ELISABETH: I am indeed sorry.

MARY: But it is well. We can make ready quickly.

JOSEPH: He left a good-night for you all. There were others whom he needed to see.

ELISABETH: Oh, the time hath been too short! We still have so much to talk about. Mary, I did not tell thee how one day John (*AARON and the boy ZACHARIAS enter, left.*)

AARON: Where are Jesus and John? They were ahead of us a few minutes ago, as we came through the olives.

JOSEPH: We have not seen them. I will go (*JOHN comes running in.*)

JOHN: O my people, we have had a wonderful time! In the moonlight we could see the mountains of Moab, and the Jor-

dan Valley, and some time I am going to explore down there. Jesus is too.

MARY: Where is Jesus?

JOHN: He is a little way back there. He wanted me to tell thee that He would come very soon. We were coming down the mountain and had nearly reached the camp. Jesus and I were ahead of uncle Aaron and Zacharias, when we heard the bleating of a lamb. Jesus said, "It sounds lost. I must find the lamb." Off He went into the olive trees, and I followed Him. We found the little lamb afraid and crying. Jesus said He didn't want it to be sacrificed at the temple, and if He cannot find the owner He is going to take it back with Him to Nazareth. Then He bade me come to thee. I saw Him lift the lamb to his shoulder. It was heavy, but see! here He comes! (*A light comes from the left, growing brighter, before the curtain closes. They are all standing and watching.*)

SCENE III

The bare hilltop back of JOHN's home at Ain Karem. It is early morning, a few days after the return from Jerusalem. Far away and below (back-left) can be seen the blue line of the Mediterranean. Some rocks are about. JOHN is sitting on one of these, chin on hand, meditating.

JOHN: I wish Jesus didn't live so far away. But (*He jumps up*) I am glad to be home again. Such a lot of noise and blood in the temple. I wonder why they have to do it that way. I didn't like that part of it much. Jesus didn't either. He said so that night when we were looking at the temple from the top of the Mount of Olives. Uncle Aaron said it wasn't right to say such things, but I think it *is* right. O God, I know that Thou art here in the wilderness, and Thou dost want people to turn to Thee no matter where they are. They don't have

to go to Jerusalem. Jesus thought that too, and said He would tell people some day. I would like to help Him "make ready the way of the Lord." Isaiah, the prophet, said something about that, that I always liked, because it was someone "crying in the wilderness." Ah, yes, I remember, for my mother taught it to me, and it's splendid!—

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
Make ye ready the way of the Lord,
Make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
And every mountain and hill shall be brought low;
And the crooked shall become straight,
And the rough ways smooth;
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

A BOY FINDS THE KINGDOM

Capernaum, or Tell-Hūm as it is called today, is on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. To go there you would either take a boat from Tiberias on the western shore, or walk for an hour by a narrow stony path along the lakeside toward the east, from the hospice at Tabgha. Passing through a break in the wall of old Capernaum you would see in the distance a littered mass of huge cut stones. It seems as if this were all, until you find the very steps of the once splendid synagogue and the bases of its pillars, with many pieces of beautiful carving lying about. You *know* that Jesus must have walked on those steps; and thinking back hundreds of years you begin to see this important city of his time rising around you—the crowded market-place, the waterside full of fishing boats, and even the very house where the boy who found the Kingdom lived!

CHARACTERS

THE FATHER

THE BOY DAVID

THE MOTHER

HIS LITTLE SISTER RACHEL

HIS FRIEND JOSEPH

SCENE I

The interior of a fisherman's house near the lakeside at Capernaum. Light background. The entrance (right-back) is from the courtyard across which one must come from the walled door by the street. Left-front goes into an inner courtyard where the cooking is done. At center-back is the low bench holding the water-jars. A crude broom is in left-back corner. A large copper or earthen basin is near the water-jars. By the left wall is a low round table on which are a few earthen dishes and an oil lamp. On the floor are one or two rush mats. By the right wall the "beds" are piled up, except for two beds on which are sleeping a boy of eleven or twelve and a little girl of eight or nine. It is

early morning. *The outside gate can be heard opening and closing. The MOTHER enters, right, carrying a large tray on her head, piled with flat loaves of bread. RACHEL, having been awakened by the banging gate, sits up as her MOTHER enters the room.*

MOTHER: Oh, yes, Rachel, thou hadst better wake up! The sun will soon be over the hill across the lake, and thy father will be coming back with his night's haul of fish. Ah, I arose at daybreak, and have been to the oven with the bread. *(She puts the tray down on the floor. RACHEL puts on her shoes and khafeeyeh.)*

RACHEL: Dost thou think there will be many fish this morning, my mother?

MOTHER: I know not, but I think there will not be any water! Thou wilt not be first at the fountain this morning, Rachel.

RACHEL: I will go now quickly. *(She goes out with the water-jar on her shoulder.)*

DAVID *(Rousing from sleep)*: I had a dream! Father and I were out in the boat and we tried to pull the net in, but it was so full of fish that we could not. Peter and Andrew were in their boat not very far away, and we called to them. They were coming to help us when I awoke. Ah—it was wonderful!

MOTHER: A good dream. . But thou, David, canst help thy father truly instead of dreaming it. He will soon be here. *(DAVID goes out. The MOTHER watches him fondly from the doorway, for sons are especially beloved.)* David, my son! Ah, he is a good lad. A good lad. *(She piles up the beds in the corner and sweeps the room. The boy returns with his FATHER.)*

DAVID: My mother! All the baskets are full of fish—almost as good as my dream, and see *(Showing a small basket)*, we shall have a fine breakfast too.

FATHER: A good thing this is market-day, for many people will be coming in from their country villages to buy.

MOTHER: Yes; I will now cook these for our breakfast. Rachel will be back soon from the fountain. (*She goes outside, left-front, to the kitchen courtyard. It is now broad day. The FATHER goes to the water-jars. DAVID brings the basin and a towel, and pours water over his FATHER's hands from one of the small jars. Then over his own. A quick knock is heard on the outside gate.*)

DAVID: That is Rachel. (*Another knock*)

FATHER: Run and open for her quickly, boy. (*DAVID goes out and returns with RACHEL, who carries the heavy water-jar on her shoulder. She is excited, but she lets the jar down carefully without help.*)

RACHEL: Oh, my father! Listen! (*The MOTHER comes in with a deep platter of fish which she puts on the low table, moving it to the center of the room. They are much more interested in this than in RACHEL, and the FATHER and boy come and sit on the floor at the table.*) Please listen to what I heard at the fountain this morning.

FATHER: Aye, a meeting place for gossiping girls and women. Wait until we have given thanks. (*All bow.*) "Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, forever and ever. . . . All that is in the heaven and the earth is thine. . . . Now, therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise thy glorious name." (*I Chronicles 29: 10-13*)

RACHEL: Thou knowest yesterday we saw the Teacher, Jesus, go away from Capernaum in a boat with his twelve friends. And this morning there was a big crowd at the fountain because of market-day, men and women not of our town. They were all talking of getting through their business quickly, and then walking to the far-away place where Jesus hath gone. Most of them knew Him and He had helped them, and they want to see Him again. There was a woman standing next to me who told me that her only son had been drowned during a storm on the lake, and one day after she was listening to Jesus

speak to a crowd of people on the hillside, it seemed as if He were talking right to her when He said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." She said that God's peace had been in her heart ever since. He sayeth and doeth such beautiful things! Last week when we were in Andrew's house at Bethsaida, he looked at me as if He knew everything about me.

FATHER: He is a prophet, mighty indeed.

DAVID: What is happening today? Dost thou think the people will follow Him?

RACHEL: Yes, they were all talking of it.

DAVID: O father, I want to go too.

RACHEL: And I!

FATHER: No, Rachel, it is too far for thee.

DAVID: But I? And thou wilt come. We will go quickly and sell the fish.

FATHER: Yes, we must go now to the market-place. After that there are nets to mend, but if thou carest thou mayest go.
(DAVID and his FATHER rise.)

DAVID: I will stop at Jonathan's house and ask him to go with me.

MOTHER: Thou'lt be going so? Here, take fish and bread with thee. It may be a long day. Six good fresh loaves, still warm from the oven. (*She puts the loaves into a small basket, opening one of the loaves and putting two fishes into it. DAVID takes out one loaf and tucks it into his wide belt.**) Take care of thyself, but help any who need thy help by the way. Go in peace.

DAVID: God give thee peace. (*He goes out with his FATHER.*)

MOTHER (*Calling after him from door*): David!

DAVID: Yes, O my mother.

* Syrian bread is baked in a round loaf about the size of a pie. It is flat, merely a top and bottom crust, so that when slit two small fishes could easily be put inside.

MOTHER: Thou hadst better keep close to Andrew. Find him, and if thou hast need of anything ask him. Go in peace.

DAVID (*Calling back*): God give thee peace.

Curtain

CHOIR *sings first two verses of "I Think When I Read That Sweet Story of Old."*

SCENE II

The same. Evening. The beds are spread out on the floor. RACHEL is sitting on one of them. The oil lamp is burning. The MOTHER is standing near the door spinning wool. She looks up anxiously and listens. The FATHER is mending a net on the floor.

MOTHER: I wonder what keeps him so late.

FATHER: There is no harm. They will all be coming together and Andrew will look out for him. I think I hear people talking in the distance now.

MOTHER: Yes, I believe they are coming!

FATHER: I will go to meet them.

MOTHER: Be sure to bring the boy back here, and not to talk at some neighbor's house.

FATHER: Oh, yea.

MOTHER (*Standing in the doorway*): It is a beautiful night. The moon is shining over the lake, so quiet and still, as if it never had any dreadful storms. Sometimes I fear for thy father, but tonight there is no fear! The Master said we must not be afraid. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork." (*Voices outside*) Ah, here they come. (*Enter the boy, his FATHER, his friend JOSEPH.*)

DAVID: Oh, my mother, there is so much to tell thee! Ah, if I had *not* gone!—

MOTHER: Sit down and tell us all. Thou'rt not too tired?

DAVID: Not I.

JOSEPH: A miracle happened!

DAVID: Wait till I tell. This morning Joseph and I hurried through the market-place here in Capernaum, and were soon on the main road. There were many people going the same way, toward the east. After a while we fell in with some boys we know from Bethsaida. Everybody was hurrying except those who were helping sick folk along. We left the road and followed a path through the fields nearer the lake, for it was to a hilly place beyond this where some people had seen the Master go with his disciples. It was almost noon when we found them, in a valley with a stream running down to the lake and much grass. We were tired and hungry but we were so glad to find Jesus that we didn't think at first of sitting down and resting. We saw a spring of water near by and went there to drink.

RACHEL: Were there lots of people?

DAVID: Yes, thousands I think.

RACHEL: Any little girls?

DAVID: Oh, I suppose so, but don't interrupt.

FATHER: Never mind. Well, and what happened?

DAVID: A great many people were sitting close to Jesus, but He was up the slope a little, on a rock, and we could see Him very well, and hear Him too. He was talking about the Kingdom of God, and oh, how beautiful were his words! I should like to belong to that kingdom. He said everyone who really wanted to, could, but they must want to belong in their hearts. I didn't understand at first what He meant, but I loved listening to Him, and forgot all about eating the rest of my lunch. I still had five loaves and the two fishes. When He stopped talking we were surprised to find how far past noon the sun was. Then we felt hungry again and I was just thinking about my lunch and the other boys were wishing they had some, when I spied Andrew pushing his way through the crowd. The

people had begun to move around, coming to the spring and stream for water. Andrew had seen me before and had nodded. Now he came over and asked if you were there, father. When I told him you were not, he said, "You must be hungry, but I see you have your lunch. Your mother saw to that."

MOTHER: Ah, Andrew is a good and thoughtful man!

DAVID: He left us then and went back to Jesus. Just as I was wondering how much of my lunch I could give the boys who were with me, Andrew came back and whispered in my ear, "Wouldst thou be willing to give the Master thy lunch?"

MOTHER: And thou didst?

DAVID: Yes, of course! But I did wonder a little, and I was very hungry. Then we saw the other disciples going about getting the people to sit down in groups. We heard Jesus' voice, and everyone was very still. He was praying to God to bless our food. We wondered about the food, but soon a basket was passed to us, and in it was plenty of *bread* and *fish*! We helped ourselves well as the basket went by.

MOTHER: Thy lunch, lad!

FATHER: It was truly a miracle.

DAVID: Yes, it must have been, father, but I was thinking such a lot all the time of that kingdom Jesus had talked about. I think I understand better what God's kingdom is.

FATHER: Tell us, lad; the Master hath talked of this often.

DAVID: When the people finished eating, they all rose up and said they would make Jesus a king, and that He should rule his kingdom in God's name. But He said, "It is not to be that way," and would not let them. Instead, He asked his disciples to leave Him, and go away from there in the boat. Then He asked us all to go away, that He might be alone. I thought He looked sad, and on the road coming home I thought more about it. He must have been sad because they didn't under-

stand. But I do! The Kingdom of God is something inside of us. I know, because I feel that I belong.

FATHER: However it may be, this is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. He is the Christ.

Curtain

CHOIR *sings last three verses of "I Think When I Read That Sweet Story."*

EASTERTIDE TABLEAUX

CHARACTERS

MARY MAGDALENE	THREE SOLDIERS
FOUR OTHER WOMEN	AN ANGEL (see Tableau V)
PETER	THREE CHILDREN
JAMES	A READER
JOHN	A SINGER
THE CHOIR	

TABLEAU I—PALM SUNDAY

SINGER: "Ride On, Ride On in Majesty" (*First verse—tune "St. Drostane"*).

READER (*Matthew 21: 1-7*): "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come unto Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her, loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say the Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon."

Curtain opens.

SCENE: *The road from Bethany to Jerusalem. It is bright sunlight. The olive-green hillside of the Mount of Olives is against the light-blue background. All of the participants are in this*

tableau except the ANGEL. (The SOLDIERS can be in this scene, if the platform is large, without their soldiers' accoutrements—wearing cloaks and turbans.) They are in attitudes as if moving along the road from left to right. It is as if Jesus had just passed by (shown by a bright light coming from the right), and the people are eagerly following and waving their branches. One is picking up a garment that he had thrown in the way. Another is reaching to cut down a branch. The flowing gowns of the women and children should be of brilliant colors—red, yellow, blue and purple—with white veils.

READER (*Verses 8 and 9*): "And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way; and the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

Curtain closes.

"And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

CHOIR: *Sings the rest of the hymn.*

TABLEAU II—GETHSEMANE

SINGER: "Into the Woods My Master Went" (*Lanier*).

READER (*Matthew 26: 36-38*): "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."

Curtain opens.

SCENE: *It is night in the Garden of Gethsemane. There are several rocks about. PETER, JAMES, and JOHN are leaning against them sleeping. A light comes from the left.*

READER (*Verses 39-44*): "And He went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And He cometh unto his disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink
(*Curtain closes.*)

it, thy will be done. And He came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."

(*Verses 45 and 46*)

"Then cometh He to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hand of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."

CHOIR: "Forty Days and Forty Nights," or "O Thou, Who Through This Holy Week."

TABLEAU III—CALVARY

SINGER: "There Is a Green Hill Far Away."

Curtain opens.

SCENE: *A road outside of Jerusalem. Hills against the dark background. On the top of one are three crosses. MARY MAGDALENE and the four other women are gazing sorrowfully at the distant crosses.*

READER (*Matthew 27: 55 and 56*): "And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children."

SINGER: "O Come and Mourn with Me Awhile."

Curtain closes during second verse of hymn, and choir joins in.

TABLEAU IV—EASTER EVEN—THE WATCH AT THE TOMB

READER (*Matthew 27: 62-66*): "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

Curtain opens.

SCENE: *A garden. Dark background. The tomb is at the right, with a rock at its entrance. A ROMAN SOLDIER is standing at the left of the tomb. Another is sitting by the fire, left, with his arms about his knees and head down, apparently asleep, and the third is leaning on an elbow thoughtfully gazing into the fire. It is night.*

SINGER: "The Shadows of the Evening Hours."

Curtain closes before the end of the hymn and the choir joins in.

TABLEAU V—THE DAWN OF EASTER DAY

ORGAN: *Plays, very softly, the first verse of "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today," and the second verse triumphantly.*

Curtain opens.

SCENE: *Upon the stone which is now at the left side of the tomb entrance sits a shining ANGEL. The SOLDIERS have drawn back in great fear and surprise. It is still dark.*

READER (*Matthew 28: 2-4*): "And behold there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men."

Curtain closes and the choir sings the hymn which the organ played at the beginning.

TABLEAU VI—THE WOMEN AT THE TOMB

SINGER: "Jesus Lives, Thy Terrors Now."

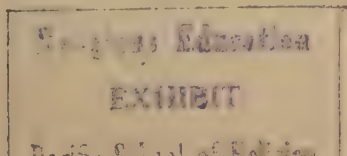
Curtain opens.

SCENE: *The four WOMEN and MARY MAGDALENE are bearing spices to the tomb. They are gazing at the rolled-away stone in amazement, and one is stooping to look into the tomb.*

READER (*Luke 24: 2-7*): "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning," [the women which came with Him from Galilee] "came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold,

(Curtain closes.)

two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they



were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

(Verses 9-11)

"And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

CHOIR: "Welcome, Happy Morning!"

TABLEAU VII—PETER AND JOHN AT THE TOMB

SINGER: "Come Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain" (*First verse*).

READER (*John 20: 1 and 2*): "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.

Curtain opens.

SCENE: PETER and JOHN are hurrying with great eagerness but with awe toward the tomb. JOHN is ahead. There is the first flush of dawn.

READER (*Verses 3 and 4*): "Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre."

Curtain closes.

READER (*Verses 5-10*): "And he, stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying: yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home."

CHOIR: *Sings the rest of the hymn.*

TABLEAU VIII—MARY MAGDALENE

READER ("A Ballad of Easter Morning." *By Mary Carolyn Davies—used by permission*):

All in the garden
When the day was made,
All in the garden—
Afraid—

"Now I walk alone here,
And the birds sing
As if there were no pain left
Or remembering.

Mary went a-walking
And heard the birds sing.
There was pain in her,
And remembering.

"As if there were no grief
left—
How can they be gay?
How can they be singing
On this day?"

"So they sang aforetime,"
Mary spoke,
"When He walked among us."
And her heart broke.

Every bird about her
Had her blame.
Then in the garden
God spoke her name.

"*The Day of Resurrection*" (tune "*Greenland*") is played softly.

READER (*John 20: 11-15*): "But Mary stood without at the sep-

ulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou, whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Curtain opens.

SCENE: MARY *has just turned away from the tomb. Her head is raised and her face radiant. A light shines upon her.*

READER: "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni: which is to say, Master."

Curtain closes.

CHOIR: "The Day of Resurrection."

THE WOMEN FROM GALILEE

CHARACTERS

SIX WOMEN

AN ANGEL (unseen)

A READER

THE CHOIR

SCENE I

A hymn is played or sung behind the scenes—"There Is a Green Hill Far Away." (Tune "Horsley.")

SCENE: *A road outside of Jerusalem. Hills are in the distance, with three crosses on the top of one of them (to the left). Before the music finishes, the curtain is drawn back. A WOMAN is sitting on a rock by the roadside (back, left of center). It is as if the road ran across the stage from left to right, coming from Jerusalem. Another WOMAN is standing near her, looking off toward the crosses. The attitudes of both indicate sorrow and weariness of body and spirit. They remain as a tableau while someone from the side of the stage reads, "And the women that followed Him from Galilee stood afar off, beholding these things."*

FIRST WOMAN (*Standing*): I saw Him carrying the cross Himself, as He went along the crowded street of the city; and, I could not bear it. He healed my little boy in Capernaum.

SECOND WOMAN: I was with the multitude on the hillside when He talked about the Kingdom of God. I can never forget Him.

Enter two WOMEN from the right, walking slowly and sadly.

THIRD WOMAN (*Sighing*): Ah—

FIRST WOMAN (*Stepping toward them*): Hath no miracle happened?

THIRD WOMAN: No. We were following the great multitude of people with the women who bewailed and lamented Him. As they came out of the city they laid hold upon one Simon of Cyrene who was passing by, coming from the country; him they compelled to go with them, and laid on him the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

FOURTH WOMAN: When Jesus turned to the crowd of women and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children," we too came away.

SECOND WOMAN: Why are there three crosses?

THIRD WOMAN: There were also two others, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death.

FOURTH WOMAN: Here come two other women. Perhaps they can tell us more. (*These two enter from right.*)

SECOND WOMAN: Were you over there? (*Pointing toward the crosses*)

FIFTH WOMAN: Yea (*Sadly*), we have just come from there. It is all over and we are going back to Galilee.

FIRST WOMAN: Can you tell us (*Fearfully and hesitatingly*) what—happened?

SIXTH WOMAN: "When they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

FIFTH WOMAN: "And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him."

SIXTH WOMAN: "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The WOMEN are silent—by their attitudes they show that they are baffled, bewildered. They have no words. The lights are slowly lowered.

THIRD WOMAN (*Becoming aware of growing darkness*): Look!

It is growing dark!

SECOND WOMAN: And it is mid-day! (*It grows much darker.*)

FOURTH WOMAN: O God, help us!

Curtain

READER: "In this hour of tribulation,
In this hour of pain and darkness,
Lo! at the sixth hour, over all the land
The darkness falls;
The noonday sun in heaven is blotted out."

From "Calvary," by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Singing of hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."

SCENE II

CHOIR: "Jesus Lives!" (*Verses 1, 3, and 4*).

SCENE: *A garden, as in the tableau scene. Two of the WOMEN enter slowly from the left, carrying boxes which contain the spices. They are talking together and their heads are bent. They hesitate about going to the tomb.*

READER (*As the curtain opens*): "And the women which had

come with Him out of Galilee came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared."

FIRST WOMAN: Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb?

Looking up they see that it is rolled away, and they run anxiously over to the entrance. The other WOMEN have entered from the left and are following. The first two, peering in, start back as the unseen ANGEL speaks, from right-back.

ANGEL: "Be not amazed: ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who hath been crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him! But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee:

(Curtain closes.)

there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you."

READER: "And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to bring his disciples word."

CHOIR: "The Day of Resurrection" (tune "Greenland").

EASTER NIGHT

In the evening of the first Easter Day ten apostles (Judas and Thomas not being present) met together in Jerusalem to talk over the wonderful events of the day when Christ arose. They had to do this in secret, for fear of the Jews. Here we find them in an upper room, possibly the same one where only a few nights before Jesus had been with them for his Last Supper.

CHARACTERS

THE TEN APOSTLES

CLEOPAS

HIS FRIEND

SCENE: *Light background. A water-jar is at one side. The floor is covered with a bright-red oriental rug. A plain, long, dark wooden table is in the center. On the table is a large earthen dish partly filled with black olives, and a flat basket containing some bread (the round flat loaves if possible). A few pieces of the bread are lying about on the table. There are also two small water-jars, and an oil lamp is burning.*

The ten APOSTLES are sitting on benches around the table. The two on the front bench are partly reclining. They are just finishing supper. There is a tense, expectant kind of feeling amongst them, as of wonder and gladness.

Before the curtain opens the hymn "Come Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain" (first tune) is played on the organ, beginning softly.

JAMES: Strange! Strange!

PETER: Wonderful!

ANDREW: Yea, the most amazing day we have ever seen.

JOHN: The Lord is risen.

BARTHOLOMEW: Did we not see how Pilate's soldiers rolled a stone in front of the sepulchre and sealed it? (*Mark 15: 46*)

JAMES: And set a heavy guard? (*Matthew 27: 65 and 66*)

JUDE: They had fear that we might come and steal away his body. (*Matthew 27: 64*)

MATTHEW: But the Lord sent the earthquake. And the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. (*Matthew 28: 2*)

SIMON: The watchers said his appearance was as lightning and his raiment white as snow.

PHILIP: And for fear of him they quaked and became as dead men. (*Matthew 28: 3, 4*)

PETER: I wonder what it all means. We did not think it would be this way. (*Musing*) The Lord is risen.

JAMES: Peter, didst thou say that it was still dark this morning when Mary Magdalene came to tell thee? (*John 20: 1*)

PETER: Yea, it was very early, but before John and I reached the tomb dawn was coming up over the Mount of Olives. Mary had told us, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid Him." We wondered if it could be possible. John, thou didst reach there first. (*John 20: 2*)

JOHN: Yea, but I did not go into the sepulchre. I stooped and saw the linen clothes lying there.

PETER: I entered and saw the linen clothes, and the napkin that was upon his head rolled up in a place by itself. (*John 20: 5-8*)

JOHN: Then I, too, entered and saw and *believed*.

JAMES THE LESS: After this, did ye return to the city?

JOHN: Yea, Peter and I came home, pondering in our hearts this great and glorious thing. We left Mary standing by the sepulchre weeping. (*John 20: 11*)

PHILIP: Ah—that was when Jesus Himself came and said unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" (*John 20: 13*)

JOHN: But she thought He was the gardener and did not know Him until she heard his voice saying, "Mary." (*John 20: 16*)

SIMON: We could not believe, when she came and told us that she had seen the Lord, and talked with Him.

ANDREW: Yea, it was *hard* to believe.

JOHN: All things are possible now to him who believeth.

PETER (*Aside, thoughtfully*): When the other women who were bringing the spices met the angel, I wonder why he said to them, "Go and tell his disciples *and Peter*." I denied the Lord last week—not only once, but thrice.

Enter CLEOPAS and his FRIEND from Emmaus.

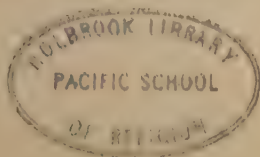
ALL: Welcome!

CLEOPAS: All hail! (*Room is made for them to sit down.*)

THE FRIEND: What think ye? This very afternoon as we were walking home through the hills toward Emmaus (*Luke 24: 13-35*), Cleopas and I were talking about all these things that have come to pass here in Jerusalem. And as we communed and questioned together, *Jesus Himself* drew near and went with us! (*All have drawn closer and are listening with expressions of intense interest.*) But our eyes were holden that we should not know Him. And He said to us, "What communications are these that ye have one with another as ye walk?"

CLEOPAS: We were so astonished that I answered, "Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?" And He said unto us, "What things?" Then we said: "The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him?"

THE FRIEND: And I said: "But we hoped that it was He who should redeem Israel. Yea, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. Moreover, certain



women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb, and when they found not his body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even so as the women had said, but Him they saw not."

CLEOPAS: And He said unto us: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to us in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.

THE FRIEND: As we drew nigh unto the village of Emmaus whither we were going, He made as though He would go further. And we constrained Him saying, "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He came in to abide with us.

CLEOPAS: And it came to pass, when He had sat down with us to meat, He took the bread and blessed; and breaking it, He gave to us. And our eyes were opened, and we knew Him. Then—He vanished out of our sight!

THE FRIEND (*Turning to CLEOPAS*): Were not our hearts burning within us, while He spake to us in the way, while He opened to us the scriptures?

CLEOPAS: Ah—yes! We rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem.

ALL (*Rising, and speaking with a triumphant ring*): The Lord is risen indeed!

The room is flooded with light, and their faces are radiant.

Curtain

The organ plays "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today."



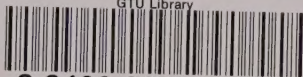


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